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ABSTRACT

Several initiatives, including this report, have been undertaken to define and understand better and help solve the problems of limited-English-proficient (LEP) school children. A study of the role of state education agencies (SEAs) in educating LEP children is reported. Five chapters contain information on the general challenge, response of the educational system, and SEA challenges; profile of LEP students, social and cultural context, and future; goals, purposes, methodology, and findings of the SEA survey; promising practices for curriculum development in California, vocational preparation in Illinois, program coordination in New Jersey, and education reform in Texas; and findings and recommendations. Main findings are that large numbers of LEP students who require special help to succeed academically are not receiving services; many states are aware of the gap between current programs and needs; and several SEAs have begun initiatives to create the necessary service system. Recommendations for SEAs include the following: create an intensity of commitment; clarify the fact that LEP students constitute a growing component of children "at risk"; document current and projected needs; and develop ways of coordinating and collaborating with local systems. Contains 24 references. (LB)

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# School Success for Limited English Proficient Students

# *The Challenge and State Response*

**February 1990**

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Because the Council represents the chief education administrator, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

The CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity provides services designed to achieve equity in education for minorities, women and girls, and for the disabled, limited English proficient, and low-income students. The Center is responsible for managing and staffing a variety of CCSSO leadership initiatives to provide better educational services to children and youth at risk to school success.

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## INTRODUCTION

The land of opportunity: this is perhaps the most powerful, traditional image of American society held by those outside it and those who want to get in.

One of the most powerful obstacles to making this image a reality for millions of Americans is low proficiency in the English language.

There is no more dramatic testimony to this fact than the alarmingly high dropout rate for children of Hispanic origin—35%, more than double the national rate of 13%, which is in itself alarming. In some communities with a heavy concentration of Hispanic youngsters, the dropout rate is as high as 68%. Although stereotypes suggest that Asian and Pacific Islander minority language children are highly successful in American schools, the fact is that dropout rates for children of these backgrounds also reach alarming levels in large urban school districts such as Los Angeles and Philadelphia.

As part of a continuing commitment to breaking down the barriers that hinder children at risk from succeeding in our educational system, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has undertaken several initiatives to define and understand better the problems of limited English proficient (LEP) children in our schools, and to devise strategies that will help them succeed. Preparation of this report is one of those initiatives.

On November 16, 1987, the Council adopted unanimously a historic statement of commitment to the nation's children, their future, and the nation's future. It opened with the following declaration: "An imperative for America's twenty-first century is high school graduation for virtually all students." Adoption of the policy statement entitled, "Assuring School Success for Students At Risk" represented an important landmark in the evolution of the Council's concern about and commitment to providing an appropriate and effective education to every child in America. It represented a commitment to youngsters who are at risk in the educational system for a variety of reasons including poverty, physical or mental disability, residence in a

community with inadequate educational or social resources, and membership in a racial, ethnic, or language minority group.

The text of the statement was developed from the 1987 Summer Institute in Montana, during which the chief state school officers met and exchanged views and information with nationally recognized experts on the needs of children at risk and the role of the educational system in meeting those needs. An important message emerging from the presenters at the Institute was that although the children who share the designation "at risk" are a highly diverse group, a large subgroup encompasses millions of youngsters who have limited proficiency in the English language. At the Institute, Hernan LaFontaine, superintendent of schools in Hartford, Connecticut, emphasized that even this subgroup of children at risk is diverse:

*Children from non-English language backgrounds can be found in virtually every state in the union, in United States territories, and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These children include American Indians, the nation's first residents, as well as the newest immigrants. Children from non-English language backgrounds are both citizens and non-citizens, children of immigrants, and children of native-born Americans (LaFontaine, 1988).*

Noting that "not all persons of non-English language backgrounds are limited in their English skills," LaFontaine pointed out that—depending on the definition of English proficiency employed—anywhere from 1.2 to 5.3 million (with the most accepted figure being around 3.5 million) low English proficiency children require special assistance in school. Hispanics, who represent an estimated 73% of all limited English proficient children, are the fastest growing population in America, expected to double their numbers by the year 2000. On the average Hispanics are younger and have more children than the rest of the population. The impact of these demographic trends is felt even more strongly by both the educational system and our society as a whole.

Bilingual education—whether to provide it, for what purpose, and how to provide it—has in some states and communities generated intense controversy about the role of the English language in our culture, our economy, and our educational system, forcing policymakers and educators to address these questions in a highly charged, not always productive, atmosphere. This controversy and debate, however, should not deter us from responding to an important educational challenge: preparation of an already large and still expanding population of children who, because of their low level of English proficiency, will fail in our schools if they do not receive some special, affirmative assistance.

The high dropout rates for Hispanic children and others from language minority backgrounds cannot be attributed exclusively to language difficulties. Many of these youngsters share the poverty, the inadequately staffed and funded schools, and the abandoned communities of other children who begin their school career "at risk" and end up as dropouts. We do know, however, that in many cases the lack of English proficiency which would enable a youngster to understand a math problem or analyze a short story, is the primary reason for poor academic performance.

Local education agencies and the federal government, which for the 1986-87 fiscal year provided $133 million for bilingual education (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), have important roles in this effort. State agencies, however, provide almost twice as much funding for bilingual education as the federal government. It was, therefore, appropriate to compile and share information about what states are doing to meet the needs of LEP students. We examined how various offices within a state education agency approach and work cooperatively on this issue; which strategies have been successful or offer hope of success; and, how forces might be joined to maximize effectiveness in the future.

A grant from the Carnegie Corporation made it possible for the Council to undertake this unique inquiry into state education agencies and their role in educating LEP children. The results of the surveys and interviews conducted offer perspective on how state agencies address the needs of LEP children. They help to illuminate some of the paths to follow to achieve our goal of ensuring every LEP child receives all necessary opportunities and assistance to enable graduation from high school.

The details of the results are presented in the following chapters of this report.[1] The findings are both disturbing and challenging:

- *Large numbers of LEP students who require special help to succeed academically are not receiving services;*
- *Awareness of the gap between current programs and needs exists in many states; and*
- *Several state education agencies have undertaken initiatives that promise creation of the necessary service system.*

The challenge for leadership in each of the state education agencies is summarized in these ten points. The agency leadership must:

1. *Create an intensity of commitment to serving children of limited English proficiency by articulating their needs and the importance of meeting them;*

2. *Guide the debate and discussion about the needs of LEP students from the "why" and "whether" of serving them to the "how."*

3. *Clarify the fact that LEP students constitute a major and growing component of children "at risk" in our nation's schools, and that any strategy designed to address the needs of at-risk children must take into account and respond to the special needs of LEP students.*

4. *Document systematically the current and projected needs of LEP students in the state;*

5. *Examine the adequacy and effectiveness of current efforts to educate LEP children within the state;*

---

[1] The Carnegie grant to CCSSO also enabled us to work toward our goal of encouraging state education agencies to improve their services to LEP children by convening two state conferences—one held in Baltimore in December 1987 and one held in Denver in April 1988.

Twelve states sent teams of policymakers, division directors, and program specialists from several areas (bilingual education/ESL, teacher certification, special education, Chapter 1, vocational, regular education, and migrant education) to the Baltimore meeting to participate in discussions and inservice training about the demographics of the LEP population, research in language acquisition, and strategies for improving teacher training and LEP student assessment.

The second conference was attended by 45 state education agency representatives—also configured into teams as for the first—from 9 states and several extra-state jurisdictions. The program of this conference mirrored the first and also included discussions of the changing role of state education agencies in providing leadership and support to the schools; the impact of bilingualism on cognition; and assessment of language skills of LEP students.

*6. Define and establish high leverage state education agency activities—e.g., research, curriculum development, assessment, training, teacher certification, funding—to improve the education of LEP students;*

*7. Make appropriate administrative and organizational assignments within the state education agency to assure better services to LEP students;*

*8. Develop ways of coordinating and collaborating with local school systems to meet LEP students' needs;*

*9. Strengthen state monitoring of the educational status of LEP students and of the effectiveness of programs that serve them;*

*10. Establish ways to learn from the experience of other state education agencies through the exchange of information, research, program development, and relevant activities on behalf of LEP students.*

Each of these tasks requires resources. For all tasks it is necessary to review use of existing resources and assure there is coordination and focus of them on the LEP students who need them. Then there must be a long-term strategy for broadening public understanding and concern about the importance of success for LEP children in educational settings. There must also be a plan to generate the resources—especially for the hiring and training of qualified staff—to meet the increasing challenge which will become more difficult if not confronted soon.

CHAPTER ONE

# Challenge and Responses

*"When I used to try to speak, everyone made fun of me so I never wanted to talk again. I couldn't understand what the teacher was saying. On one test at school, I didn't write a single word because I didn't understand. That was the last day I went to school."*

*A Mexican girl who immigrated when she was in the 10th grade and dropped out at age 16 (Olsen, 1988)*

America is an open society, a fluid society that is enriched by the ebb and flow of a diverse and constantly changing population. But it is also a large and complex society, with complex institutions and strong traditions that require new interpretations and new strategies to help it adjust to a fast-changing world.

## The General Challenge

In recent years educators and policymakers have become increasingly aware of the new challenges posed to the educational system by the arrival of millions of new immigrants and the fast rate of growth among these immigrant families once they arrive and settle in the United States. As a result of these demographic factors, an increasing number of youngsters find it difficult to learn in an English-speaking classroom, and the number of youngsters with such problems is expected to continue to grow rapidly in the coming decade.

Language minority students whose limited knowledge of English presents an immediate barrier to their opportunity to learn in mainstream classes are known as limited English proficient (LEP). They are entitled by federal civil rights laws to extra educational services to meet their special needs.

As stated so eloquently

by the Mexican girl quoted above, when LEP children enter school their most immediate need is to gain access to the mainstream English curriculum in order to participate fully in the life of the school and the society at large. To this end, for almost twenty years federal, state, and local school systems have sought to help LEP students develop effective communication and academically-related skills in English, primarily through language assistance programs such as bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL). In addition, states have enacted legislation and have developed program standards, curriculum guides, and instructional materials designed to bring about improvements in services provided to LEP students.

Yet, the following and other findings of recent studies show that despite these important policy and programmatic initiatives, many school districts remain unprepared to meet the challenge that LEP children present to their schools:

- A significant number (25%) of LEP children get no extra educational services from local education agencies (CCSSO, March 1989);
- Most students receive insufficient English language instruction and little, if any, support in the native language (Olsen, 1988);
- Immigrant students are more likely than non-immigrants to be retained in grade and placed in low academic tracks on the basis of language barrier or low academic progress (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988); and
- Many LEP students appear to be inappropriately placed in special education classes for the learning disabled and speech impaired (CCSSO, March 1989).

Often, however, LEP children require more than instruction in English to be successful in school.

As Hartford, Connecticut school superintendent Hernan LaFontaine pointed out in his presentation at the CCSSO Summer Institute:

Limited English proficient children have a formidable task facing them as they enter school. If they are to succeed in school, they must overcome the obstacles caused by poverty and assignment to low-achieving schools, learn to deal successfully with an institution and individuals from a culture other than their own, master all the subjects taught in the regular school curriculum, and become completely proficient in a second language—English (LaFontaine, 1988).

By focusing on the role of state education agencies (SEA's) in addressing the educational needs of LEP students, this report provides information that CCSSO hopes will assist state agencies in their continuing efforts to develop effective programs. But it is important to remember that a host of factors—some of them within the traditional purview of the educational system and some of them outside it, come into play in determining the success or failure of a child to become proficient in English. Among these factors are:

- Cultural diversity among students;
- Diversity among communities, which may have different goals or methods of attaining those goals for their children;
- Poverty, unemployment, and related social problems;

- Political controversy about goals and methods of education in English; and

- Lack of data about the nature of the challenge, the effectiveness of existing strategies and programs, and interrelationships among the multiple educational programs and institutions that come into play with LEP children.

Further, in seeking to meet the educational challenge posed by LEP students, it is possible to be misled and diverted from the evidence that many children from language minority families arrive at school speaking English. For example, the 1980 Census figures show that most Spanish-speaking families in the United States speak English, i.e., they are bilingual.[2] Consequently, a sizeable number of these children enter the schools with oral English proficiency and are never served by bilingual or ESL programs.

Yet as LaFontaine observed, "basic communication skills do not suffice if the task at hand is learning chemistry, reading American literature, or writing research papers." In other words, oral proficiency in English is not sufficient in order to succeed academically.

## The Response of the Educational System

Twenty years ago neither state nor federal governments did much to meet the extra educational needs of any educationally disadvantaged students. That has changed. The federal government initiated special attention to LEP students through enactment of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 and through its 1970 application of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to LEP students. This latter activity was upheld and given new impetus by the U. S. Supreme Court in its landmark 1974 decision in Lau v. Nichols.

Today, LEP students are served in programs targeted specifically on their language needs as well as in compensatory, special, migrant, and vocational education programs designed for a variety of students at risk of failing in school. In some states the level of financial support for bilingual education and English as a second language programs has surpassed federal bilingual education support. For example, in Texas only 10% of all services to LEP children are funded by federal bilingual education (Title VII) programs; in New York the amount is 23%; and in New Jersey it is 2.5%. About half of the states have legislation that mandates or permits bilingual education programs and at least 16 provide some level of financial support for local bilingual education programs. Thirty-seven states operate an identified bilingual education office with a full-time professional staff.

Many LEP students receive support in federal and state compensatory, special, and vocational education programs as well as bilingual and ESL programs. At the state level, the bilingual and other categorical programs (e.g., compensatory education, special education) targeted on educationally disadvantaged children are staffed by program specialists responsible for providing technical assistance and other services to local school systems. A similar operating structure of program specialists for

[2] The proportion of Asian background children who are bilingual upon entering the school system is estimated to be lower than Hispanic background children since 50% of all Asians are recent immigrants.

each of the categorical efforts is usually found at the local level.

However, despite the enactment of new legislation, increased funding, and establishment of an administrative structure to facilitate implementation of programs for LEP and other educationally disadvantaged youngsters, the majority of LEP students in need of such programs and assistance do not receive them. In addition, the success of these programs in meeting the educational needs of LEP students varies widely.

## The Challenge to State Education Agencies

Having identified LEP children as a group at risk of educational failure, CCSSO felt it was important to examine carefully the dynamics of the state role in meeting their needs, to identify state agency barriers to serving them fully, and to learn and share information about successful state efforts in this area.

In our initial investigation the lack of coordination among state agency units that administer programs for the educationally disadvantaged emerged as an important barrier to education of LEP children. Although LEP students are often eligible to participate in special education, vocational education, migrant, and compensatory education programs, it appeared that in most states little coordination exists between the bilingual or ESL program offices and the offices administering the other categorical efforts. School-level practices resulting in part from this lack of coordination include: mainstreaming of LEP children into the regular classrooms before they have adequate English proficiency to do the work; fragmented delivery of services to the students; and discontinuity in their educational development.

Preliminary discussions between CCSSO staff and SEA officials in several states revealed that in general "SEA staff outside the bilingual education program pay too little attention to LEP students," although some states had undertaken initiatives to try to improve the situation. In December 1986, CCSSO received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to undertake a project that would generate current, concrete information on the relationships between state bilingual and ESL programs and other programs that serve LEP children and hopefully provide a basis for eliminating this barrier to the academic progress of LEP children.

This report presents the results of that project. Chapter Two examines the demographics of the problem. Chapter Three summarizes the goals, methodology, and results of two surveys: a questionnaire sent to directors of SEA categorical program units and one sent to directors of general curriculum units in 21 states with high numbers of LEP students. Chapter Four describes SEA initiatives to serve LEP children in four states—California, Illinois, New Jersey, and Texas. Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations of the project.

CHAPTER TWO

# LEP Students: Who Are They?

Pinpointing the characteristics and the location of limited English proficient children in the educational system is a crucial first step toward devising and delivering appropriate educational services to them. Because we know that the population of language minority families in this country is growing, we must also attempt to anticipate the amount and pace of the growth and the state and local school systems where this growth will have an impact so that services can be put in place in time for the arrival of those children—not too late to do them any good.

## Language Minorities in the United States

The increase in the population of LEP children reflects a broader demographic trend—the growth of the United States population of persons from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In 1980, the U. S. Census reported the following breakdown of persons from non-English-speaking backgrounds:

| Language Minority Population | 1980 Figure | % of Total U.S. Population |
|---|---|---|
| Hispanic | 14.6 million | 6.4 |
| Asian and Pacific Islander | 3.5 million | 2.1 |
| American Indian, Eskimos, Aleuts | 1.4 million | .6 |
| TOTAL | 19.5 million | 8.0 |

More specifically, Census data also document the rapid growth in the number of Hispanics and Asians—the largest components of the non-English language background persons—since 1970. The 1980 figure for the Hispanic population represents an increase since 1970 of over 50 percent, from a population of 9.6 million comprising 4.5 percent of the total population. Since 1980, the Hispanic population has grown to 19.4 million in 1988 representing a 33% increase in this yet to be completed decade.[3]

Between 1970 and 1980, the Asian and Pacific Islander population grew by 141 percent to 3.5 million persons. Although the rate of growth of this population is more dramatic than that of Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders comprise a much smaller segment of the U. S. population, 2.1 percent. Demographers believe that the high rate of growth in this population is a one-time phenomenon, primarily the result of immigration. These population increases are attributed to two powerful demographic trends—higher fertility rates among Hispanic women and increased immigration from Asian and Latin American countries.

As the general population of Hispanics and Asians has grown, so have the numbers and proportion of language minority students in our nation's schools. For example, public school enrollment of Hispanics grew by 28 percent from 1976 to 1984, to more than 3.4 million students (Condition of Education, 1989).

"Clearly, not all persons of non-English language backgrounds are limited in their English skills. Some have replaced the language of their childhood with English as their dominant tongue. Others are fully bilingual," writes LaFontaine (1988). Even so, the number of these students in need of language-related instruction has also increased and there is evidence that, on the average, they are doing less well in school than their English-speaking peers.

The results of a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study on the educational progress of language minority students suggest that, regardless of their level of proficiency in English, language minority students share certain experiences as they move through the educational system. In general, they:

- ❒ Perform less well at all grade levels than students from predominantly English backgrounds;
- ❒ Are more likely to attend schools characterized by a poor learning environment; and
- ❒ Are less likely than non-language minority students to be enrolled in academic courses and more likely to be enrolled in vocational courses (Baratz-Snowden and Duran, 1987).

Dropout rates among some groups of LEP students send another powerful signal that the educational system must do more to meet their needs. The following data from a 1989 report of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) tell the story for Hispanic students, compared with white and black students:

| National Dropout Rates, 1988 | |
|---|---|
| White | 12.7% |
| Black | 14.9% |
| Hispanic | 35.8% |

[3] 1988 population figures were not available for Asians.

Students from long-established Japanese and Chinese immigrant families and the newer Asian immigrants who arrived in the U. S. with education and skills have achieved considerable success in the American educational system. For example, the 1980 Census showed that 33% of Asian American adults 25 years and older had graduated from college, compared to 17% of white adults and 8% of black adults. And between 1982 and 1987 the percent of Asian high school graduates who earned 13 credits or more in the "new basic" subjects (English, social studies, mathematics, and science) was 48% compared to 29% of white students, 24% of blacks, and 18% of Hispanics (The Condition of Education, 1989).

Some data suggest that more recent Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants are encountering more educational difficulties than their predecessors. No comprehensive data on the academic achievement of Asian and Pacific Islander LEP students are available, but there is evidence from a few school systems that these youngsters are having a difficult time. A 1988 study of LEP children in California found that the highest dropout rates occur in the largest high schools, those with over 1,700 students, and that "the highest average attrition rate was for schools with large concentrations of Southeast Asians (48%); next came the Spanish language sample schools, averaging a 46% attrition rate (Olsen, 1988). Another study on immigrant students showed the dropout rate among Filipino students to be more than 41% and among Samoans, about 60% (NCAS, 1989).

In San Diego, a 1988 study of area high schools showed that Southeast Asian students performed above average on nationally standardized math tests and below average on verbal scores. Within the Southeast Asian group the Vietnamese students, who generally were well educated in Vietnam prior to coming to the U. S., and the Hmong students were performing above the average grade point average for white students. The Khmer and Lao, however, were performing below the grade point average for white students (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988).

In Philadelphia, it has been reported that accurate statistics are not available, but there has been an increase in the dropout rates for Southeast Asian students at certain high schools (Peters,1988).

## Defining the LEP Population

Out of the estimated 6.2 million school-age language minority children nationally, approximately 3.5 million children are eligible for special language-related instruction either in English or in the native language. These are the limited English proficient students.

Because these children are entitled to special services under federal law and because mastery of English is an important step toward academic success, this is the group on which CCSSO's recent studies have focused.

The figure of 3.5 million represents an estimate, not a count of the number of children who are limited in English proficiency and require special assistance in school. Other estimates have placed the number of children currently in this group at various sizes from 1.2 million to 5.3 million. There are two main reasons for variation in the estimates—the fact that some school districts report only the number of LEP children who are

receiving services, while others report the number who are eligible for them, and inconsistency in the standards used for defining LEP.

In most states, local districts have the option of selecting the cut-off point on an English language proficiency test which determines whether or not a student is placed in a bilingual and/or ESL program. Consequently, it is possible for a child to be eligible for language services in one district and ineligible in another within the same state.

As many educators have already learned, perhaps even more important than arriving at an accurate national estimate of the number of LEP children is determining the distribution of these youngsters among state and local educational jurisdictions. This data, from which some national statistics are compiled, also has its limitations. However, there is adequate information to confirm that certain states and school districts have a significant population of youngsters from a minority language background; that many of them require assistance in order to succeed in an English language school; and that their numbers are increasing. For example:

❒ *Nine states have identified 25,000 or more LEP children (CCSSO Survey, 1987).*

❒ *California, which reported an LEP population of more than 613,000 children or 12.4% of total enrollment in the 1987-88 school year, has both the largest number and highest percentage of LEP students in the country. Almost 50% of these children are in the Los Angeles County schools (Olsen, 1988).*

❒ *Texas has the second largest LEP population of any state—more than 300,000 children, or 8.8% of total enrollment. In the Houston school district, LEP children comprise about 15% of the students (Texas, 1988).*

❒ *English is not the first language for one in 10 or 80,000 children in the Massachusetts school system. About half of the LEP students are Spanish-speaking; the other half are divided among nine significant language groups. Their first languages range from Portuguese—with 13,000 students—to Southeast Asian languages, French, Creole, Greek, and Italian (Glenn, 1988).*

❒ *Asian LEP students are concentrated in the western (56%), southern (31%), and midwestern (16%) regions of the country. In California, they represent 13% of the 613,000 LEP students; in Texas 4% of 260,000; and in Minnesota, 75% of a total of 9,000 (Tsang and Wing, 1986).*

In some areas, a relatively small number of LEP children from diverse language backgrounds can pose as much of a challenge to the educational system as a large concentration of LEP children. Said one 11th grade Korean girl: "I was in an ESL class with all Spanish [speaking] kids. My sister and I were the only Koreans. The Spanish kids talked Spanish. I was confused. Was this a Spanish class or an English class?" (NCAS, 1989)

"We do have school districts faced with only three or four children in each of 15 or 20 language groups," observed LaFontaine. But he emphasized that a study by the General Accounting Office, an arm of the Congress, concluded that "only 22% to 26% of LEP students are in situations where bilingual education may be impractical" (LaFontaine, 1988).

## The Social Context

The learning experience of LEP children may be impeded by the fact that—especially in the case of Hispanics, who make up 80% of LEP children—they are often members of minority groups and poor families. In 1984, "the proportion of Hispanic children living in poverty...was more than double that of non-Hispanic families" (LaFontaine, 1988). The incidence of poverty among Hispanic children in 1984 was 84% above that for all U. S. children.

The social environment in which these children live and receive their education is characterized by residence in substandard housing in overcrowded neighborhoods, high unemployment rates and high rates of family mobility which can cause serious discontinuity in their education. Children of migrant and seasonal farm workers, for example, may change schools often or be out of school for periods of time. Many Puerto Rican youngsters actually divide their educational time between English language schools on the mainland and Spanish language schools on the island, because their families move back and forth in order to take advantage of the greater economic opportunities on the mainland (LaFontaine, 1988).

## The Cultural Context

Language minority children—even those who speak the same language—come to the school from an incredibly varied range of environments and experiences that exert a powerful influence on how they live and how they learn once they come to English language schools. These experiences, stresses, and values that immigrant children and their families bring to their educational experience cannot be quantified, but they are a very real part of the children's lives and they do influence children's attitudes about and their ability to succeed in school.

"My mother cries all night. I hold my little sister because she is scared and I try not to think about our father. He was shot before we left. I don't do my homework most nights because it is so sad at home and I try so hard to help. Now I am repeating the 10th grade...I cannot keep up." These are the words of a 10th grade Salvadorian girl who immigrated to the U. S. when she was 12 years old (Olsen, 1988).

A Cambodian girl, an 11th grader, describes the intense stress she copes with at home while trying to succeed in school: "My family has such set values...They hold onto the old ways. It is very difficult to explain something to them about my life now. We end up always arguing...about school, religion, how I dress...I hate my family" (Olsen, 1988).

The level of previous education and the type of educational methods used in children's or their parents' country of origin can have an impact on children's success in English-speaking schools. "Many of the achievement differences between language minority groups that are commonly explained by different cultural values placed on education may more properly be explained by the difference in native language literacy skills and family educational background," explains LaFontaine (1988). "Children who already have strong oral and literacy skills in their first language have a tremendous advantage...Likewise, children whose parents are

literate in their native language generally have an easier time mastering English."

Not all LEP students are immigrants. In 1981, national data indicated that two-thirds of all language minority people in the United States were native born; and three-quarters of children ages five through fourteen with limited English proficiency were born in the United States (LaFontaine, 1988).

Thus, the LEP student population is not a homogeneous group sharing similar problems and requiring similar solutions. The early experiences and environment of these native born LEP students may be very different from those of their counterparts who immigrated to the United States. An LEP student from a middle class family with professional parents and an adequate education by the standard of his or her native country who enters the U. S. at age 16 faces a very different set of problems than a native born six year old from a low-income family whose parents speak little if any English and who hears little English spoken by adults in the neighborhood.

## The Future LEP Population

Even as state and local school systems grapple with the challenge of educating LEP students now in the schools, they are becoming increasingly aware that they must prepare for an even greater influx of LEP children over the next decade.

The general population is expected to grow about 17% between 1980 and 2000, and the language minority population by about 32% in the same period (LaFontaine, 1988). The language minority population is considerably younger than the population as a whole, and by the year 2000, the number of school-aged children of non-English language backgrounds is therefore expected to increase by 40% compared with 16% for children in the general population.

The largest single group of LEP students, approximately 80%, are Spanish-speakers. Hispanics are the fastest growing population in America with a birth rate higher than the national average and a lower median age. Hispanic immigration, illegal and legal, continues at a high rate. All this will contribute to a likely doubling of the Hispanic population in the United States between 1980 and the year 2000.

This dramatic Hispanic population growth will contribute to the continued growth of the LEP student population. Indeed, 92% of the projected increase in LEP students by 2000 is expected to be Spanish-speaking students (CRS, 1984).

CHAPTER THREE

# The CCSSO Study:

# A Survey of State Education Agency Activities

## Goals and Purposes

As state concern about and financial commitment to the education of LEP children has increased in recent years, so has the awareness of the complexity of meeting the challenge of providing effective services to these children.

Simply running in place—facilitating and providing basic language services to LEP children already identified and in the schools—presents a difficult challenge to state education agencies. Yet the demographic and social forces shaping the LEP population demand much more. They demand a response to the new awareness that for many LEP students, language proficiency is not the only key to academic success. High dropout rates, poverty indices, and other information about LEP children suggest that language is only one of a host of social and cultural factors that interact to determine the educational success of language minority children.

Thirty-seven state education agencies have established bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) program units to administer state- and federally-funded programs. These units have the primary responsibility for coordinating technical assistance on second language instruction for LEP students to local school systems.

Most LEP students are also eligible to receive services under other federal-, state-, and locally-funded categorical programs such as compensatory education, special education, and vocational education. But many

observers, including state education specialists, have been reporting for some time that significant numbers of LEP students were not receiving support services from these other programs. Additional cause for concern emerges from studies that suggest LEP children may be inappropriately placed in special education classes; misclassified when they do have a legitimate need for special education; and, as one researcher put it, "deported" into vocational education (NCAS, 1988).

Yet there had never been a systematic attempt to examine, catalogue, and analyze what state education agencies are doing to serve LEP children, which techniques and programs are effective, and what obstacles stand in the way of doing better. This is why the Council initiated a project to identify and examine successful state-level approaches to meeting the educational needs of LEP students.

## Methodology

In an attempt to collect basic data on state efforts, in 1987 CCSSO distributed five survey questionnaires to state education agency officials. In addition, CCSSO staff visited and interviewed SEA personnel involved in developing, administering, and providing technical assistance on language and other categorical programs for which LEP students are eligible. This chapter presents the results of the questionnaires; Chapter Four reports on the information gained from the visits and interviews.

The set of survey questionnaires was sent to directors of categorical program units (bilingual education, vocational education, special education, migrant education, and compensatory education/Chapter I), requesting information for the 1985-86 school year on:

- The number of students served and the types of services provided to LEP students by the various categorical programs;
- The degree to which categorical units were coordinating their delivery of technical assistance;
- State-level barriers to delivery of services to LEP students at the local level.

Forty-eight of 50 states and the District of Columbia responded to some or all of the categorical program surveys.

An additional survey was sent to directors of general curriculum units in 21 states with high numbers of LEP students. It was designed to collect information about issues of coordination between bilingual education/ESL units and the general curriculum units of the SEA. Sixteen states responded to this survey.

## Key Survey Findings

The information supplied in response to the survey questionnaires helps identify and draw attention to specific substantive and administrative challenges that must be confronted in educating LEP children.

Despite a good overall state education agency response rate, the quality and nature of the survey responses imposed some limitations on the analysis. One limitation of the data is that some responses were incomplete or lacking in sufficient detail to make a reliable analysis. In addition, generalizations about the nationwide severity of some problems could not be made because the total number of states responding to a given question was small.

The most overarching conclusion to be drawn from the surveys is that lack of adequate data—

both on access issues such as enrollment and on substantive educational issues such as the academic status of LEP children—poses a serious barrier to enlightened, effective program development and service delivery to a large and growing group of children with complex and varied educational needs.

We do know that there are significant numbers of LEP children who are not receiving services that they need in order to succeed in school. But we found it difficult, if not impossible, to even ascertain how many LEP children there are, where they are and whether they are being served. Although recipients of federal funds are required to provide information about the number of children they serve to the U. S. Department of Education, the Title VII bilingual education program reaches only 5 to 7 percent of eligible students, so figures they collect on children served by the program are far from comprehensive.

In conducting our survey we learned that even questioning the states directly about a range of programs that are relevant to LEP children does not produce accurate, comprehensive data on the number of students, and the degree to which they are being served. For example, one state reported that it was not serving any LEP students. Yet a conversation with agency staff revealed that some school districts are implementing programs funded with federal bilingual education funds. Another state reported that all LEP children were served, but a staff person told CCSSO staff that this was not true. Some SEAs simply do not know how many children need services because local school systems use a variety of criteria for defining LEP students.

The lack of reliable data on the numbers and location of LEP students can be traced to the lack of nationally accepted criteria and procedures for identifying LEP students.

These weaknesses in the system reverberate both vertically—from local to state to federal levels and back; and horizontally—across program areas such as special education and vocational education—throughout our educational system. These deficiencies also undermine the placement of LEP students in appropriate educational programs. For example, a child who is identified as LEP in one state may move to another state—and no longer be eligible for services. Further, the fact that state and local education agencies rarely monitor the achievement of LEP children once they are mainstreamed suggests that there is an incomplete understanding of the needs of these youngsters as they make a difficult academic transition.

Until we have learned to identify, evaluate, and keep track of the progress of LEP children in the schools, we will never be able to serve them well. Problems of data collection and monitoring will only be resolved with the widespread cooperation of many individuals and agencies involved in the educational establishment.

The CCSSO survey results show that, at each phase of instructional programming for LEP students, state departments of education face a major challenge in fulfilling leadership, monitoring, and technical assistance functions. However, they also point the way to specific, tangible, and doable steps that can be implemented now—on the state level—to improve information about the needs of LEP students as well as the capacity to meet their educational needs.

In the following sections we analyze the results of the surveys, organized into these categories: unserved children, state and local education agency relationships, and additional services to LEP children (compensatory, special, migrant, and vocational education). Following the analysis we present a series of specific actions we believe can help guide states in their efforts on behalf of LEP students.

## Unserved Students

A significant percentage of LEP students—distributed among 32 of the 48 states that responded—do not receive language-related educational services to help them succeed in classrooms where instruction is in English. CCSSO found that:

❒ *In these 32 states, an average of 29% of LEP children were reported as unserved by bilingual or ESL programs.*

❒ *In 20 states, at least a quarter of the LEP children are not served.*

❒ *In four of the 32 states, more than 60% are reported as not receiving services and one state reported that it served none of these children.*

Twelve states reported that all students identified are receiving adequate and appropriate services from the local school system. But anecdotal information that complemented the data revealed that these states in fact have identified barriers such as limited funding, insufficient data, lack of coordination, and others that impede the provision of services to all eligible children. Thus, it appears that in at least some of the 12 states, a portion of LEP children are not receiving services.

The survey responses show that states with a large population of LEP students provide services to a greater proportion of the students. However, it is important to remember that in states with large numbers of LEP students, two to five percent of children unserved represents a sizeable number of children.

What happens to LEP students who do not receive services? Often, even though they may have been identified, they are placed in English-only classrooms with teachers who have no training in ESL or language development methods and are thus unable to guide the academic development of these children. Some of these youngsters do catch up in time with their classmates and succeed in mainstream classes. Others may become disengaged, fail to meet minimal academic standards, be retained in grade and ultimately join the large number of language minority students who drop out of school.

Failure to serve LEP students represents an abdication of legal responsibility as well as social responsibility. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Education Opportunity Act (EEOA) of 1974 state that failure to provide language minority students with access to the teaching-learning process is a denial of their civil rights. Under the EEOA mandate, state and local education agencies have an obligation to "take appropriate action to overcome language barriers" that confront minority students.

## State-Local Relationship

Monitoring and technical assistance are the twin engines that drive the educational machine to provide appropriate

educational services to all LEP children who require them.

State monitoring of local school districts' activities and procedures can directly influence whether LEP children have access to programs they need. State-provided technical assistance to local school districts can help ensure quality educational services are provided to children who have gained access.

Coordination, both among program units within the state education agency, and between the state agency and local school systems, is essential in order to achieve the maximum benefits of monitoring and technical assistance.

States were asked if they monitor programs for LEP children, and to indicate the type of monitoring they do: program; budget; compliance with federal/state regulations. In addition, because there have been indications that some LEP children are mainstreamed before they are able to perform the tasks required in English-speaking classrooms, states were queried specifically about whether and how they trace the academic performance of former LEP students who have been mainstreamed.

Forty-four states answered the questions about monitoring. Of these, 35 indicated that they monitor services provided to LEP students. Twenty-nine states said that they do program monitoring (an unsurprising response since one of the primary functions of state education agency bilingual/ESL units is to coordinate inservice training and provide technical assistance in this instructional area). Only two state bilingual education units indicated that they only monitor for compliance with federal civil rights requirements that prohibit discrimination against language minority students on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

States reported that the purpose of most program monitoring is to ensure local compliance with state regulations alone (14 states) or with both state and federal regulations (29 states).

Nine states reported that they did not monitor local program implementation. Follow-up interviews with staff from these states revealed a variety of political and organizational constraints that staff felt hindered their ability to monitor state or federal mandates to educate LEP students. Shortage of state staff, limited funding, and lack of enforcement mechanisms were cited as key obstacles to monitoring local program implementation.

The major indicator of the educational development of LEP students is their academic performance after they leave ESL or transitional bilingual education programs to undertake studies in mainstream classrooms. Although there is little information about the academic performance of these former LEP students compared to their English-dominant classmates, there are indications that many mainstreamed students fall behind in their academic tasks. This suggests that some students are being mainstreamed prematurely. Generally, a student remains in bilingual or ESL classes for three years or less. Yet, second language acquisition research indicates that it takes five to seven years for most students to acquire the level of English language proficiency needed to engage in more complex academic tasks.

Forty state directors of bilingual/ESL units responded to a question asking if they had a mechanism for monitoring the performance of former LEP students and if so, to

describe it. Twenty-nine or 60% of these did not have a mechanism for tracking the students. Nine of these 29 states offered an explanation for not having a process. Among the reasons reported were that they did not see the purpose of such data collection, and that monitoring the performance of these students is a local function, not a state one.

The eleven states that do have a mechanism for monitoring the academic performance of mainstreamed LEP students reported they measure students' performance on statewide achievement tests for a year or two after they leave the bilingual or ESL program. With the exception of Texas and Arizona, survey respondents did not explain the processes, if any, used to address the language-related needs of mainstreamed students who are not meeting the required standards for performance in the regular classroom. A similar question was asked of directors of general curriculum units in the SEA, and four out of 16 responding states indicated that they had a statewide mechanism for monitoring the academic performance of mainstreamed LEP students.

In sum, state responses to a series of questions about monitoring programs for LEP students in general, and about tracking the students' performance after they leave bilingual or ESL classrooms suggest that monitoring activities need to be strengthened, and that the educational systems' efforts to serve LEP students may be impeded by the lack of a comprehensive data base on their academic performance.

## Additional Services to LEP Children

State education agencies are responsible for providing technical assistance to local school systems in a number of program areas for which federal and state funds are funneled to them. The potential success of large numbers of LEP children in school may depend to some degree on whether they receive needed educational services other than bilingual education or ESL, and on whether the positive effects of these services are maximized by coordination of their delivery with language-related programs.

In the survey questionnaires CCSSO tried to elicit information that would shed light on the degree to which LEP students are receiving services under programs other than bilingual education and ESL, on coordination of these services within state education agencies, and whether the services received are appropriate to the youngsters' needs. The information—and lack of it—provided by the states raises serious questions about whether LEP children are receiving the additional services they require. It also seems to confirm reports that have surfaced over the years which suggest that there is little coordination between bilingual/ESL programs and the general instructional program, often resulting in discontinuities in the education of LEP students—especially when they are placed in mainstream classrooms and perform poorly.

### *Compensatory Education*

State education agency officials were asked to supply information on the relationship between bilingual education efforts and services provided by the state under the Chapter 1 compensatory education, migrant education, special education, and vocational education programs. The following information emerged from an analysis of their answers.

As discussed in Chapter Two, large numbers of LEP children live in poor families, attend schools with large numbers of poor children, and therefore receive services under the federal Chapter 1 compensatory education program.

Although exact figures are not available, it is estimated that 12% of all Chapter 1 eligible students are LEP (Carlson and Strong, 1988). This means approximately 1/3 (530,000) of all LEP students are served by Chapter 1 services. However, this figure may be an undercount of LEP students eligible for Chapter 1 services since it is derived from a base number of (1983-84) 1.3 million LEPs. As previously stated, the number of LEP students is believed to be approximately 3.5 million.

The answers to questions about whether Chapter 1-eligible LEP students receive compensatory education services, and about the nature of the services, raise two areas of concern: first, that many eligible LEP children may not be receiving compensatory education services; and secondly, that the services they receive may not be tailored to their specific needs.

It is important to understand why services such as those provided under Chapter 1 may be needed by a student who is already in bilingual education or ESL classes. In most states, bilingual education includes only second language instruction (English) and instruction in a particular content area in the native language to ensure that the student develops cognitively and progresses through the curriculum at the same pace as non-LEP students. However, bilingual education programs usually do not have sufficient resources to help address specific problems that may emerge in academic content areas. Thus, remediation for these types of problems must be provided through some other program, which in many cases should logically be Chapter 1.

Thirty-one directors of state Chapter 1 units responded to a question asking them to describe the type and purpose of services provided to Chapter I-eligible LEP students. Twelve replied either that no Chapter I services at all are provided to Chapter I-eligible LEP students, or that no special services are available to these students. The Chapter 1 program has never received funding that would provide services to all eligible children. On the national level, an estimated 50% of all Chapter 1-eligible students are served. The great majority of these are elementary school students.

There is also an administrative barrier that impedes delivery of Chapter 1 services to LEP students in many states. Some school districts and/or schools prohibit a student from receiving assistance through more than one categorical program—e.g., from both Title VII bilingual education and Chapter 1 compensatory education. A recent study of Chapter 1 services to LEP students noted that 5% of all districts studied automatically excluded LEP students (Carlson and Strong, 1988). This practice can be attributed at least in part to the difficulty of reconciling the requirements of the federal Chapter 1 program (that funds must be used to supplement, not to supplant other services that would otherwise be provided by the local school system to LEP students with local funds) with those of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

which prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin.[4]

Another problem in directing funds to LEP students is that Chapter 1 regulations require services to language minority or LEP children to address needs that derive from educational deprivation, not those resulting from lack of English language proficiency. However, because there is no effective instrument for differentiating between academic problems resulting from these two types of deprivation, in some school districts LEP youngsters may be prohibited from access to services they need.

In responses to the CCSSO survey, the remedial reading/writing/math cluster were identified as the services most often provided to LEP students under Chapter 1 compensatory education programs. ESL and bilingual basic skills instruction ranked second in the list of services provided most frequently.

Chapter 1 LEP students face both a language barrier and academic difficulties. It would seem appropriate to modify Chapter 1 classroom instructional features (e.g., the manner of teaching reading or math, materials used) to take into account their needs as second language learners, particularly in light of the fact that LEP students are usually mainstreamed before they become fully English proficient. But, federal statutory and regulatory barriers prevent educators from developing interventions that would enable LEP students to benefit from Chapter 1 programs in the area of English language development.

State directors' responses to open-ended questions indicate that some states provide the same services through the same methods to all Chapter 1 children, not tailoring them to the students' special needs. The following comments typify the view held by directors in these states:

"LEP are served the same way as others are served."

"Local school systems often find it difficult to allocate funds for services to LEP students."

A second factor that may inhibit state and local educators from offering Chapter 1 services to LEP children is the belief that language instruction alone meets all of their needs. "We have an excellent bilingual program that serves LEP students...There is no need for Chapter 1 ECIA and the state compensatory program to duplicate services," responded one Chapter 1 state director who reflected a commonly held view. But as explained above, bilingual education programs (as currently implemented) are not structured to remedy students' problems with academic content.

### *Migrant and Special Education*

The CCSSO survey also attempted to document the coordination of services to LEP children who are migrants, and to generate information that would assist us in understanding better the status of LEP students in special education. However, the paucity of data and detailed information provided by state education agencies responding to questions about these programs makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions on these topics.

In the case of migrant education, 11 of 30 states responding to a question

[4] The U. S. Supreme Court's interpretation of Title VI in the Lau v. Nichols decision, ruled that local school districts had a responsibility to do something to help language minority LEP students overcome their language barriers.

about inservice training reported that they cooperate with bilingual education departments more than any other state education agency program area in providing the training, but did not indicate how common this practice is.

With regard to special education, we had hoped to shed light on two previously identified issues:

- Inaccurate identification of language minority children as needing special education when the problem is a lack of English proficiency; and
- Classification of LEP students into inappropriate special education categories, especially learning disabled and speech impaired.

The CCSSO survey of state special education directors posed questions about the number and classification of LEP children enrolled in special education; state guidelines for their placement; how SEAs organize their staff in this area; inservice training; and barriers to appropriate identification and placement of LEP children in special education.

Responses to many of the questions were too sketchy to provide reliable information. However, the need to strengthen procedures for serving LEP students with special needs was documented by the response of 28 states (out of 34) which said that they had no guidelines describing how local school districts should serve these students. Half of the 28 states said they have a specialist on their staff responsible for this area; states that do not have a specialist said they do collaborate with the bilingual/ESL unit.

Twenty-nine states responded to the question about barriers to serving LEP children and of these, 14 pointed to lack of expertise on the local level as the greatest problem. Eight states cited the lack of inservice training as an impediment to effective statewide delivery of special education services to LEP students.

Further efforts should be made to obtain current, accurate information about how migrant and special education programs serve—or do not serve—LEP students. We believe it is particularly important to pursue better information on the issues of identification and misclassification in special education, because of the gravity of the potential long-term effects of improper identification or classification on a child's educational career.

*Vocational Education*

The questionnaire sent to state vocational education directors focused on three areas deemed especially important to the participation and success of special populations in vocational education: funding sources and use of funds; role of state education agency in providing leadership; and participation of LEP students in vocational education programs.

Addressing questions about funding, 26 of 37 states responding said that vocational education services to LEP students are supported by the federal Perkins Act setaside funds for minority populations. States reported that the Perkins Act funds are most commonly used to provide tutors and interpreters for LEP students, but are also used to provide counseling services, curriculum materials, bilingual aides, and classroom facilitators. A dozen of the 26 states did not specify how they used the funds, simply stating that "support services are paid through the Perkins Act" or "funds are targeted to the locals."

Two items on the questionnaire were designed to elicit information on the second major theme—state leadership in vocational education for LEP students. Specifically, states were asked if they had guidelines for bilingual vocational education; and if they offered inservice training related to the needs of LEP students and if so, whether this was done in collaboration with other units of the SEA. Thirty of the 40 states that responded to the question said they had no guidelines on bilingual vocational education services. The answers revealed no consistent relationship between having guidelines and the size of the LEP population in the state. New Mexico and Texas, both states with high LEP enrollments, did not have guidelines whereas three of 10 states with an LEP enrollment of under 10,000 students do have them.

Twenty-two states responded to the question about whether they have inservice initiatives which address vocational education and the LEP population, and 11 replied in the affirmative. Most states covered only one issue in the training; some covered two. Topics covered included ensuring access to programs, learning styles, and improving the vocational education teacher's ability to meet the needs of LEP students.

Among the more comprehensive state inservice efforts were those of Michigan and Massachusetts. Each state listed a minimum of three workshops designed for staff including vocational educators, guidance personnel, special population coordinators, and some district personnel. Topics covered in Michigan included cultural awareness, aimed at "providing information about LEP students' needs prior to serving" the students; and in Massachusetts, "recruiting, retaining, and placing LEP students in vocational education programs."

On the question of collaboration between vocational education directors and other SEA units addressing the needs of LEP students, only eight of 14 vocational directors who replied supplied information on the nature of the collaboration and the unit with which the collaboration occurred.

Pursuing the third area of concern about LEP-students in vocational education, the questionnaire requested a breakdown of the students' enrollment by occupational area. Reports from 21 states that provided this information reveal an overwhelming concentration—more than two-thirds—of the students in three occupational areas: home economics, office and trade, and industry; and underrepresentation of LEP students in health, technical education, apprenticeship training, and other programs that offer greater opportunities for high income occupations.

Nearly a third of the entire group—more than 18,500 students—was enrolled in office programs. Lowest enrollments were reported in apprenticeship training (95 students), cooperative education (609 students), and health programs (1,047 students). This pattern of enrollment of LEP students is consistent with enrollment patterns of non-LEP vocational education students in general.[5]

[5] A study conducted by MPR Associates in 1988 reported that LEP students are underrepresented in vocational education when compared to non-LEP students generally. That is LEP students took less credits/courses in vocational education than non-LEP students. However, enrollment data collected from the State Directors of Vocational Education by CCSSO show that within the LEP population there are higher enrollments in areas noted above.

Given the problem of insufficient and inconsistent data on LEP students in vocational education no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the survey findings. However, it appears from the figures submitted that access to the full range of vocational education programs remains a problem.

This raises basic questions yet to be answered: Why are students concentrated in certain program areas rather than others? And do students enrolled in the home economics, office, and trade and industry classes take a sufficient number of courses to become skilled in the occupation, or do they acquire minimal skills in one area and then move on to another?

## Conclusions

The answers to the CCSSO questionnaires support a number of findings which, although preliminary, can be used by state agencies as a guide to further exploration of the issues and development of stronger programmatic responses to improve the quality of education for LEP students.

Most important, a message of concern and commitment must be stated by top leadership of each state education agency. The message should:

- *Provide necessary symbolic and political support for program improvement and coordination among programs;*
- *Create an environment in which meeting the needs of LEP children is known to be a high priority of the education agenda; and*
- *Communicate this concern to the Governor, legislature, and local school systems.*

The findings of the survey suggest strongly that in addition to creating an environment conducive to change there are a number of steps state policymakers should take to set a course of action on behalf of the growing population of LEP students:

1. *Each state should develop and implement uniform statewide criteria for identification and placement of LEP students in need of bilingual and ESL services.*

2. *States should be more assertive in monitoring service to LEP students, both to ensure that all of those in need are served, and that services provided to the students are appropriate to their needs.*

3. *States should collect and analyze academic performance data on reclassified, formerly LEP children now in regular classrooms. This would offer a basis for improving services to students whose English language development is in a transitional stage.*

4. *States should provide incentives to collaboration between bilingual education and special education units and consider developing guidelines to assist local education agencies in identifying and placing LEP students who may require special education.*

5. *In states with significant numbers of LEP students, state special education units should enhance their ability to provide leadership to local school districts on how to serve those who need special education.*

6. *States should examine their Chapter 1 programs to determine the degree to which they offer eligible LEP students access to compensatory services and assist them in language development.*

7. *States should exert stronger leadership in guiding the delivery of vocational education services to LEP students by: a) conducting an assessment of the nature and quality of vocational education programs provided to LEP students across the state; and b) developing guidelines for identifying vocational education needs of LEP students, increasing their access to quality programs, conducting inservice training of vocational education and mainstream teachers, and developing community outreach programs.*

CHAPTER FOUR

# State Education Agency Efforts to Meet Needs of LEP Students: Promising Practices

As the CCSSO survey of state agencies and other research demonstrates, LEP children face a plethora of barriers to success in the educational system ranging from the lack of bilingual education services to faulty identification and placement and premature mainstreaming. The CCSSO survey also demonstrates that state education agencies respond to these problems in a variety of different ways. The bilingual education office is generally the focal point for directing the education of LEP children, but these offices vary widely in size, resources, and responsibilities.

For example, in 1989 New York state's bilingual education office has a staff of 16. In California—where the identified LEP population is four times as large as New York's—the state bilingual education staff is 14 persons.

Responsibilities and functions of state bilingual education offices include technical assistance, carried out by virtually all of them; inservice training; and to a lesser degree, liaison with other state education agency units that do or should provide additional services to language minority students.

Historical barriers to development of effective state programs for LEP children include fragmented and incomplete policy development concerning the students; traditional attitudes and habits; a context of discomfort and controversy around the issue of using a language other than English; and lack of resources. Yet despite these obstacles, in recent years some states have taken initiatives designed to attack and do away with the barriers that undermine the education of LEP students. An important

goal of the CCSSO project was to identify these promising initiatives and practices, gather information about them, and communicate it to other state education agencies that are searching for ways to address the problems.

On the basis of questions asked on the CCSSO survey about state education agency programs, we identified several efforts about which we gathered information through site visits and conversations with a variety of staff and other individuals involved in them. In this chapter we describe four different, promising approaches states have developed to implement their commitment to serving LEP students:

- *In California: A highly substantive, curriculum-based approach, based on research knowledge about second language acquisition, and implemented in schools attended by a very high percentage of language minority students.*

- *In Illinois: An attempt to expedite the transition of LEP students into vocational education by conducting a thorough assessment of each student's needs and then providing appropriate support services—including tutoring—to help them succeed in the program.*

- *In New Jersey: An effort to coordinate the delivery of services to youngsters with multiple needs, including a new planning and application process for soliciting state funds; inservice training to enhance the quality of instruction, and improvement of coordination among categorical program units.*

- *In Texas: An administrative and management initiative designed to focus resources of various educational programs on LEP students in the context of statewide school reform; and the targeting of low-performing schools to receive additional assistance to improve student performance on state proficiency tests.*

These state initiatives are described in more detail in the following sections.

## Curriculum Development—California

California, which has more language minority children than any other state, has been experiencing a steady increase in the number of immigrants residing there for nearly a decade. This increased immigration and higher birth rates among language minorities born in the United States have altered the demographic profile of students in the state school system. Evidence of this includes:

- Twenty-nine percent of the state's 4.5 million students are language minority students, and 15%—more than 600,000—have been classified as LEP (Olsen, 1988);

- From 1977 to 1987 there was a 250% increase in the number of LEP students enrolled in the state school system (Olsen, 1988);

- In 1988, for the first time in this century, more than half of the children in the state's public schools were members of minority groups (Crawford, 1988).

More than three quarters of language minority students/LEP students are concentrated in five counties: Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Clara, and San Francisco. More than a fourth are enrolled in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Predictions are that by 2018, California will become a "majority minority state", with no ethnic group having majority status. This anticipated continuing intensity of growth in the minority language and LEP population has placed state and local education officials under considerable pressure to devise effective ways of meeting their needs.

One response to this pressure is the "Case Studies Project," initiated by the state Office of Bilingual Education in 1980, which was conceived as an approach to stimulate both LEP and English-speaking students to improve their academic performance. The project began in five elementary schools in 1981. It showed evidence of meeting its goals by 1986 when median scores of participating students had risen above the district norms. In Los Angeles the Eastman School Model was expanded to seven other schools in the district three years ago and will be implemented in an additional 20 schools this year.

In the following sections, we describe the general framework of the project and provide more specific information on how it has been implemented at one site, the Eastman Avenue Elementary School.

## Curriculum Design

"We took...sound teaching theory, added it to the research in bilingual education, came up with risk-taking strategies of redoing the school, and went with it—focused, consistent, and clear."

This is how Eastman's principal summarizes the highly substantive curriculum reform implemented there and at other participating schools. It is based on several important findings from research on acquisition of a second language:

- Language proficiency consists of mastering a second language on two levels: on the communicative or conversational level, and on a deeper or academic level that enables a learner to perform academic tasks in the second language;
- Bilingual persons may transfer academic language proficiency from their native language to a second one; these skills are not necessarily language specific; and
- Communicative proficiency can be taught through comprehensible and meaningful second language instruction in which teachers focus not only on helping students acquire second language skills but also on teaching academic content.

The general framework of the curriculum instituted at Eastman called for a gradual transition from instruction in the native language with an ESL component to an all-English program. Students are assigned to each phase of the design based on their proficiency in both the native language and English. They are mainstreamed into all-English classrooms when they are at or near grade-level in content area knowledge.

At each of four different "phases" or levels, students take some courses in the native language, some in ESL or sheltered English, and some in English. Progressing from Phase I, in which all content areas are taught in Spanish except physical education, art, and music

which are taught in an English classroom, eventually they arrive at Phase IV, in which they take a language arts class in the native language but all other remaining subjects are taken in mainstream English classes.

**The Eastman Experience**

In East Los Angeles where Eastman Elementary School is located, more than 90 percent of children in the public schools are Mexican-American. At Eastman, 99 percent of the children are Hispanic. As of April 1988, 1,036 of the school's 1,700 students were identified as LEP and only 441 were considered to be proficient in English. None of these 441 students, however, came from an English-speaking home.

A new principal, having struggled during her first year with what she called a great deal of "confusion at the school...regarding bilingual education," decided that accepting the state's invitation to participate in the program might help resolve some of the pending questions about instructional goals and inconsistencies about what actually went on in various "bilingual education" classrooms. Using the curriculum matrix provided by the California Department of Education, the principal and bilingual coordinator proceeded to adapt it to the environment and resources available at Eastman.

As is common in California and many other states, there were not enough trained bilingual teachers at Eastman to effectively serve all of the students who needed them. Steps taken to address this and related organizational problems included reassigning the bilingual teachers—who had been teaching in English part of the day—to teach only in Spanish to several classes; and "teaming" for art, music, and physical education. During these all English portions of the day, students of all levels of English proficiency were grouped together for instruction. Teachers chose which classes they would teach depending on their interests and strengths. They were then "teamed" with a grade-level teacher. Consequently, a teacher who was strong in music might teach three music classes.

Other innovations at Eastman as a result of this program are:

- Reorganization of classrooms by dominant language and English proficiency, rather than by traditional grade level;
- A shift from the "concurrent translation" method in which a teacher translates the content being presented and students generally pay attention only to the presentation in their native language, to more separation of languages—i.e., certain subjects were taught consistently in one language or the other;
- A shift from a grammar-based ESL teaching method to one based more on communication and content; and
- Greater emphasis on teaching curriculum content, which in the past had been sacrificed to emphasis on abstract language instruction.

An important factor in implementing the changes was inservice training, which provided the school's teachers with information on practices that are effective in working with both LEP and non-LEP students.

**Outcomes**

At Eastman, the overall pattern of academic performance has been one of improvement since 1980. Third grade students' scores on the California Assessment Program (CAP) increased significantly between 1980 and 1987 in reading, writing, and math. Reading scores rose by 64 points, writing by 75 points, and math by 71 points. By 1987, third grade students had surpassed their district counterparts by 16 points in reading, 20 points in writing, and 41 points in mathematics.

Similar progress was also observed for the sixth grade students during this period. By 1987, reading scores had increased by 41 points, writing by 41 points, and math by 24 points. Relative to their district counterparts Eastman's sixth graders showed improvements, yet not by a wide margin. Reading scores were slightly (7 points) below district averages by 1987, while scores in writing and math were three (writing), and four (math) points above district norms.

The Eastman principal reported that although some teachers did not like the new organization and requirements imposed by the program, they changed their minds as they saw their students progress under the new curriculum.

In general, students in the other schools that adopted most or all of the features of the Case Studies Project instructional model have also shown academic gains. Although the degree of implementation varied due to different conditions in the schools, the fact that it can be replicated with positive results is a crucial proof of its success.

**State and Local Educational Agency Roles**

The concept of the "case study" model implemented at Eastman and other schools came from the California Department of Education which conducted research, developed the curriculum matrix, generated a list of potentially eligible schools across the state, and provided both symbolic and informational support to those selected to participate.

A state education agency staff person who served as project director devoted half of his time to the project, and a consultant was assigned from the bilingual office to act as principal liaison with each school. The state encouraged and supported the project by conducting meetings and briefings on the theoretical framework for the project and the curriculum design. It continued to exercise a leadership and coordinating role by convening project staff three times a year to share their experiences and accomplishments.

The state education agency passed through approximately $200,000 in funds granted under the federal Title VII bilingual education program to one of the five schools to serve as the consortium grantee. Additional resources were provided by the state Bilingual Education Office.

There are two primary factors that observers and participants say have contributed to the program's success and the decision to replicate the model. First is the commitment of the Los Angeles Superintendent of Schools to bilingual education, which had a positive effect on changing attitudes of the school board, press, and the public about bilingual education. Second is the energy and commitment of the Eastman principal who is credited with having a management style that helped foster consensus—especially among English-speaking teachers—of the need to understand and respond to the LEP students.

**The Future**

In 1986, the U. S. Department of Education terminated the Title VII grant, and the Case Studies Project was ended. In 1988, however, because of the success of the Eastman project the Los Angeles School Board adopted its basic design as the model for the county's Bilingual Master Plan, a $20 million countywide expansion effort.

The district's commitment to the project has enabled the staff at Eastman to continue the implementation of the model without interruption of program operations. In 1986, the model was adopted in seven "replication sites" (schools) in the district and in 1987, 20 additional schools were chosen as expansion sites.[6] In the expansion sites, one or all instructional features of the model were adopted depending on the resources of the school and the characteristics of the LEP population.

To provide instructional leadership to the 28 schools involved in implementing the model, the district established an administrative unit. The office serves 33,000 students, and 780 teachers are engaged in the implementation of the model. The office conducts staff training which targets teachers and administrators. Topics of these inservices include: cooperative learning, direct instruction, sheltered English approaches, and integrated language arts strategies. The office conducts two formal in-school training sessions yearly and conducts three conferences for all project schools.

## Vocational Preparation—Illinois

Illinois' LEP population has increased by 29 percent since 1983, to a total of 45,000 students. Three-quarters of the students attend school in Chicago. The majority speak Spanish, but Polish, Russian, Chinese and other languages are also represented in the school system.

Concern in Illinois about the need of special populations for vocational education services can be traced back more than a decade to the creation in 1976 of seven demonstration sites at which disadvantaged students were targeted for assistance. Following the positive experience of the operation of an "assessment center" in one school, the state education agency encouraged local Chicago staff to apply for funding to expand the service to additional sites and to add services such as tutoring. When the federal "Perkins setaside" vocational education program was enacted, state and local officials met and decided to target setaside funds for LEP children to further expand the size and services of this vocational education effort.

[6] The replication sites had similar student-teacher characteristics as the Eastman School and, therefore could adopt the curriculum model without major modifications in the design.

Among the issues that this inititaive was designed to address are:

- Lack of bilingual support to enable LEP students to enroll and complete vocational education courses;
- Apparent underenrollment of LEP students in occupationally-specific vocational education courses (64% of LEP compared with 73% of all students); and
- Over-representation of LEP students in home economics (compared with all students).

The program consists of offering support services to LEP students in 54 secondary schools in the city of Chicago. Services include career counseling, native language tutoring, vocational assessments, and scholarships. LEP students have access to all the services available within a given school. However, the range of services available in an individual school vary.

**Assessment**

The first step in the program is to conduct a thorough assessment of a student's interests, academic abilities, aptitudes, and functional level so that he or she can be placed in appropriate classes. The assessment process, which is implemented in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade is conducted in the students' native language. It consists of several steps:

- Providing students with an overview of vocational education programs and career opportunities;
- Administering interest and/or aptitude inventories, in Spanish, by bilingual personnel;
- Review of the results by an assessment specialist with the student, teachers, counselor, and—if the student is in special education—his or her parents; and
- Determination of special services required by the student and provision of the services.

**Instructional Services**

A bilingual vocational resource specialist in each school coordinates implementation of the services needed by each student. The services offered include tutoring in the classroom by peers, tutoring by college-level vocational students, and tutoring in math and science by vocational education aides.

***Tutoring by Peers***

Among the beneficiaries of the LEP program component which operated in 1987-88 in 54 Chicago schools, were some 3,000 LEP students who received tutoring in vocational education classrooms. Chosen by the classroom teachers, the tutors work under the teachers' supervision. They must be proficient in the student's native language and in English and have advanced knowledge of the vocational education subject matter.

Before beginning their work, tutors receive training in instructional methodology, peer counseling, and listening skills. At the mid-point of the assignment they participate in additional inservice meetings designed to identify unmet needs and address problems that may develop during the first half of the school year. In the classroom, the tutor may focus either on translating the lesson being taught or on clarifying vocational terms and concepts unfamiliar to the LEP student.

***Tutoring by Bilingual Vocational College Tutors***

College students who are majoring in a technical area—e.g., engineering, business architecture,

computers—are recruited and hired to help LEP students become more successful in vocational education. Use of college students offers staff more flexibility to provide assistance as the need arises in various high schools.

In 1986-87, two bilingual vocational education college tutors assigned to one school were able to assist 45 students in areas including drafting, accounting, and computers. Staff believe that these college-level tutors offer a bonus to LEP students by serving as role models, as well as tutors.

*Vocational Aides*

These aides—in many cases part-time college students or staff with experience working in public and private enterprises—assist LEP students to develop broad competencies in math and reading which are a condition for success in vocational education. Unlike the college tutors, who may work in a number of schools, the aides are assigned to a school for an entire year. They provide assistance to classroom teachers and work with students in academic resource centers equipped with materials, computers, audio-visual equipment, and other instructional aids.

**Role of State Education Agency and State-Local Relationship**

The assessment and instructional services described above have been offered to LEP students in Chicago as part of a broader state effort to assist students with a variety of special needs. Within the Illinois Office of Special Populations are staff assigned to work on programs for various target groups: LEP, disadvantaged, and disabled. Staff functions relating to the LEP vocational education project include monitoring service implementation and providing technical assistance—through consultations, conferences, and workshops—to ensure quality; development of instructional materials; and funding the Chicago Bureau of Support Services, the local agency to train staff.

Funding for the program flows from the state's allotment of federal Perkins Act funds to the Chicago Bureau, which is responsible for delivering services to all of the target groups. In the case of this program, resources are channeled to each school based on a yearly assessment of needs and an availability of resources.

**Outcomes**

Sponsors of the program supplied CCSSO with the following indicators of success:

- 76% of LEP students who received services in the vocational education academic resource centers finished vocational classes with a grade of "C" or better;
- 80% of LEP students attending career seminars designed to motivate them to attend college indicated that they planned to go to college;
- 92% of LEP students tutored by the bilingual services component improved their grades in vocational education classes; and
- Since the inception of the program there has been a gradual increase in the number of languages from six to 12 in which services are provided to LEP students.

CCSSO staff found program staff enthusiastic; positive outcome data on the tutoring component to be particularly strong; and coordination between the federal, state, and local participants in the program well articulated.

Operating in neighborhoods and schools with high concentrations of at-risk students, this program seems to offer the prospect of success for youngsters who must often overcome low basic skills levels as well as a language barrier if they are to complete the program. In the past, LEP students have been delayed from even entering vocational education programs until they were judged to have mastered English. With the special assistance provided here, they can progress in terms of substantive knowledge at the same time they develop English proficiency.

### The Future

In 1986-87, this LEP program received $1.5 million of the state's entire allotment of $3.3 million under the Perkins setasides. That amount has since been reduced to about $700,000.[7] Chicago has complied with the 50 percent local match requirement by providing remedial reading, math, and bilingual services to LEP students. The state education agency also pays for instructional services (basic vocational education program) which are coordinated with this program but which operate out of a different budget.[8]

## Program Coordination—New Jersey

New Jersey has identified approximately 36,000 or nine percent of its total student enrollment as LEP. About two-thirds of the children speak Spanish, but representation of about 100 other languages has been documented. Enrollment of Hispanic and Asian students has increased dramatically since 1979—by 22% for Hispanics and 144% for Asians; enrollment of both black and white students in the state has declined—by 23% and 13% respectively.

State law requires any school district that has identified ten or more LEP students who speak a language other than English to provide a program in English as a second language for them. If the number of LEP students in the same language group exceeds twenty, the district must provide for them a full bilingual education program. Bilingual programs in New Jersey currently serve, in addition to Spanish-speakers, members of 11 other language

[7] The decrease in funding was a result of improved methods of identifying students' needs. There was no reduction in services.

[8] CCSSO found in its survey that 26 out of 37 states responding indicated that they used Perkins Act setaside funds to provide vocational education services to LEP children.

groups including Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, and Haitian Creole.

**State Education Agency Initiatives**

As in Texas, many of the New Jersey State Department of Education initiatives on behalf of LEP students developed in the context of a broader statewide education reform movement. A newly appointed education commissioner initiated a study of the entire state education agency which led to a reorganization in 1982. The next year he presented a comprehensive education reform plan to the legislature, which adopted a package that was implemented between 1985 and 1987.

One reform initiative that has been particularly influential on the state education agency in shaping its programs for LEP students is the requirement that high school students pass a new High School Proficiency Test (HSPT). The HSPT examines students not only on basic skills but also on more complex and challenging tasks such as their ability to comprehend reading passages, write essays, and solve multiple step mathematics problems. The HPST is administered to ninth graders, and students who do not pass may take it again in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade if necessary.

In preparing this report, CCSSO looked at three types of New Jersey state education agency initiatives: increasing access of LEP students to compensatory education; enhancing the ability of bilingual and ESL teachers to help students master the skills tested on the HSPT; and improving intra-departmental coordination.

**Access to Compensatory Education**

The state Board of Education required that all students take the HSPT examination in English in the ninth grade, and that LEP students be held to the same graduation standards as those students whose first language is English. This posed a double problem for many LEP children who faced a language barrier and were educationally disadvantaged as well. Recognizing the need of these children for compensatory education, the SEA moved to eradicate two significant barriers to their access to it:

- a state prohibition against providing funding from more than one state source to students with multiple problems; and
- and the long-established attitude of local districts that LEP children's needs should be met through bilingual/ESL programs and other funds should not be targeted to these same youngsters.

In addition to changing the regulations, the state education agency reorganized so that the Directors of Bilingual and Compensatory Education both report to the same Assistant Commissioner. The state education agency also encouraged counties, in working with local school districts, to coordinate and focus their efforts on LEP students by undertaking the following initiatives:

- Ensuring that all LEP students who need compensatory education are identified by examining data generated by annual assessments of student performance;
- Establishing a coordinated application review process that requires various local district units to collaborate on preparing one application that delineates all—not just bilingual education—categorical services to be provided to the LEP students; and

- Conducting intensive training of district and county personnel in the above process.

**Improved Teaching of Language Arts**

Complementing the state education agency's efforts to solidify relationships and coordinate instruction to children with multiple needs, New Jersey also launched a focused effort to increase the effectiveness of bilingual ESL programs in selected schools and to help the districts prepare LEP students for the HSPT. This was implemented through Bilingual Education Training Institutes (BETI), which were targeted on teachers and administrators working with LEP students in the sixth through eighth grades because the test is administered to students in the ninth grade.

The BETI training was offered to bilingual/ESL staff of three pilot schools participating in a broad "urban initiative" program which was part of the state's education reform initiative. Training was also made available to 50 non-pilot school districts on a regional basis. A condition placed on participating schools and districts was that they send a team comprised of bilingual, ESL, and mainstream teachers and a supervisor that could function as a "leadership team" within the school or district.

Teachers participating in the BETI focused on areas including content-based ESL instruction, developmental reading, instruction in the second language, and developing oral proficiency. Administrators studied topics such as coordinating instruction across programs, facilitating communication among teachers, and using evaluation results for improving classroom instruction. Sessions were led by outside experts.

Among the positive effects of the institutes, say observers, have been creation of long-range planning mechanisms for bilingual education and development of a corps of master teachers who can assist others to improve their instruction and skills. For example, teachers from Newark who received initial training through the BETI institutes have trained a corps of 150 teachers during the past three summers. In Camden BETI participants have produced a booklet on teaching strategies learned during the institute and disseminated it to other teachers in the district. Finally, in Perth Amboy a collaborative arrangement among BETI participants, basic skills, and content teachers has resulted in the creation of a new reading program which is expected to better address the needs of LEP children.

Positive outcomes have also been noted in districts participating in the regional training seminars. Findings from a follow-up survey conducted by the state education agency showed that teachers had incorporated the teaching strategies learned during the training sessions and that they were also sharing with other teachers the approaches learned through the regional training seminars.

Students at risk who enter the system after eighth grade, the state realized, may have a particularly difficult time passing the HSPT. For this reason, the state education agency created a "Special Review Assessment" (SRA) program that enables a student to be assessed in the native language by a team of teachers who interview the student, review his or her classwork, and examine reading, math, and writing skills. The SRA process becomes operative for students at the 12th grade level who have failed the HSPT at the 10th and 11th grades. Over 100 assessors have been trained to use

the SRA process, which can be conducted in 12 languages. As of the 1988-89 school year, 125 students have been awarded their diplomas as a result of meeting the requirements under the SRA program. A student is also required to pass an English fluency test.

**Intra-Departmental Collaboration**

State officials believed that it was important to foster a consensus, both within the department and among district-level personnel, on the importance of and methods for meeting the needs of LEP children. To meet this goal they created a two-year (1983-85) training project to provide state and county-level specialists in areas other than compensatory or bilingual education with basic knowledge about bilingual and ESL education.

This training project was implemented through a conference, a series of monthly workshops, and an intensive two-day session covering program planning, curriculum, assessment, evaluation, and research findings in second language learning. Participants and observers in the training say that they have identified the following positive outcomes:

- Strengthening the collaboration between special education and compensatory/bilingual program staff;
- Improving the ability of county-level specialists to provide technical assistance to districts and to monitor local program implementation;
- Increasing the demand by districts for technical assistance offered by the county.

Though substantial progress in state-level coordination has been made, more appears to be needed. The training prescribed above provided emphasis on special education issues of LEP students, and state agency collaboration has been enhanced by appointment of a liaison person between the compensatory/bilingual education office and special education. According to a district Bilingual Education Director, state-level coordination with special education has resulted in the reduction of LEP student placements in classes for the educable mentally retarded. However, local special education staff still may require more training in how to differentiate between a handicapped condition and the various stages of language acquisition. Data submitted to CCSSO by the state suggests that there may be overrepresentation of LEP children in the "learning disabled", and "speech impaired" categories.

Other indications that cross-program collaboration is not yet what it might be are that no information at all was available about LEP students in programs for the gifted and talented, raising questions about the system's ability to identify gifted and talented youngsters who have limited ability to function in English. There was also no information about how—or whether—data on LEP students in vocational education is actually used to improve services to those students.

## Education Reform and LEP Students—Texas

The state of Texas has identified more than 274,000 students—10 to 15 percent of the state total—as LEP. Due largely to an influx of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, enrollment of LEP children—of whom 90 percent are Spanish-speaking—increased 27% from 1980 to 1988. During the same time period there was a 58% increase in enrollment of Vietnamese children. However, the state has also identified significant numbers of children who speak one of several Asian or European languages, as well as Farsi, Arabic, and Chinese.

Texas law mandates bilingual education instruction in a district with 20 or more students from the same language group, and requires that those not served through bilingual education receive at least one instructional period of English as a second language daily.

A major reform of state education law started in 1983 when the legislature called for a comprehensive study of the state system and culminated in passage of both legislative authority and funding for reforms the next year. The reforms, combined with the arrival of both a new state Board of Education and a new Commissioner, provided the opportunity to institute major changes in both the substantive and administrative aspects of the education of LEP children in the state.

### State Education Reform

Components of the state reform legislation that had significant implications for the education of LEP students included:

- A new requirement for statewide testing of all students;
- Establishment of a single, statewide passing standard of 70 or more on basic skills, spurring the need to teach certain "essential elements" to students in all districts across the state;
- A shift from a district-based compliance system to a performance-based accountability system.

The reform initiative brought about increases in funding for bilingual education, which rose from $7 million in 1985 to $37 million in the 1986-87 academic year. The state increases in per pupil allocation enabled school districts to strengthen services to LEP students by providing additional training to teachers, purchasing native language materials, and hiring additional in-classroom supplemental staff.

Statewide reform initiatives in early childhood education were aimed at LEP and poor children in the state. The state provided funding for 3 hour, 1/2 day prekindergarten classes and for 6 hour per day, 8 week summer programs. Districts had the option of implementing prekindergarten bilingual programs if they had sufficient numbers of LEP students. The programs emphasized the development of communication and cognitive skills as well as the social and emotional development of the children. To meet the needs of working parents many school districts supplemented the state funds with categorical funding (Chapter 1, migrant) or local funds and expanded these programs to full-day programs.

### Implementation of Reforms

State education agency officials noted that public attention to Texas' educational system increased at the same time the state's economic situation was worsening. Although additional funding was

provided for education programs, there was a reduction in state administrative costs manifested, for example, in the decline of the size of the SEA staff from 1,086 persons in 1978 to 850 in 1987.

The Texas Education Agency approached implementation of the reforms through two sets of strategies—agency reorganization in August 1985 with additional changes in fall 1989 and substantive program development efforts, especially through technical assistance to local districts. Although not all of the reforms were targeted exclusively on LEP children, they created a context in which the state education agency could reconsider and restructure its approach to educating these children.

Under the 1989 reorganization, the Commissioner created a new Deputy Commissioner responsible for special programs who is charged with implementing efforts on behalf of children at risk. Within the new Commissioner's purview are two functions which have a major impact on LEP students—program development and compliance. This signifies a closer relationship between the processes of identifying noncompliant school districts and assisting them to develop programs to bring them into compliance with state and federal requirements.

Since the 1985 reorganization, the state education agency has established teams that monitor all categorical programs on the local-level, terminating a system in which a school district might have been visited for compliance purposes three or four times a year, each time by an official monitoring only one program. The state education agency realized that in addition to being disruptive and inefficient, the previous system was reinforcing an uncoordinated, segmented approach to students with multiple needs.

Under the new system, a compliance team of specialists from each categorical area visits each school district every five years, auditing for compliance with federal and state law in a range of programs including: bilingual, special education, vocational education, migrant, and Chapter 1. The new approach is based on the philosophy that more than just stimulating school districts to come into official compliance, the process should encourage and assist them to devise program changes to help students improve their achievement. Thus, districts found by the auditors to be out of compliance are now referred to the accreditation and program development unit rather than to the compliance unit for citation.

Accreditation visits are scheduled a year after the compliance visit and provide the school district with time to correct deficiencies that may have been identified by the compliance team. Under the new system, phased in between 1985 and 1987, the primary task of the accreditation team is to assess the degree to which districts are effective in educating students as measured by the Texas Education Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). The accreditation team is still responsible, as in the past, for determining compliance with state regulations in areas such as health and library services, staff credentials, and building conditions, but the emphasis now is on assessing success in the academic mission.

Implementation of the new compliance system was enhanced by training monitoring staff to work as generalists capable of identifying potential problems not just in one categorical area, but in a range of programs. It was also helped by the state education agency's revision of the monitoring instrument and the form of the final report.

**Performance-Based Accreditation**

The state's focus on improved academic achievement for all students including LEP, now drives the accreditation process and has generated a system in which all districts must teach the same "essential elements" to all students. To ensure that students are meeting the standard, they are tested every odd year in reading, writing, and mathematics starting in grade three.

Before visiting a school district, the accreditation team develops a district profile that describes the performance of the district's students on the TEAMS test, breaking results down by number of students, and by subject, grade-level, and ethnicity of the students; and comparing performance of all groups at the state, regional, district, and school-level. Any school in which 60% or more of its students have not mastered the "essential skills" in reading, writing, and mathematics is considered a low-performing school and becomes eligible for special assistance.

The accreditation unit's technical assistance staff works exclusively with school districts whose accreditation status has been lowered in developing a school improvement action plan that specifies objectives and processes for meeting them. The plan emphasizes new approaches rather than those that have failed in the past. The Texas Education Agency program development staff and a network of 20 Regional Educational Service Centers that specialize in effective schools methodology provide on-site technical assistance to schools that need it.

Within the context of the broader reform effort to standardize what is being taught to all students in the state, the Texas Education Agency developed specific strategies designed to assist schools in helping LEP students meet the new standards. One was the development of "Guidelines for Language Usage," an instructional program guide based on key findings of language acquisition research, that outlines how much time should be devoted to instruction of LEP students in the native language at each grade level and for each subject area. The guidelines make clear that LEP students are required to master the same "essential elements" as other students in the state. However, in order to do this effectively, the state points out, students may be learning in their own language, and both the pace of instruction and instructional materials may have to be different from those used for English-speaking students. The state education agency will also develop "essential elements" in ESL and in language arts. The state agency has also tried to encourage innovation by granting troubled schools flexibility in the use of state funds for compensatory and bilingual education.

## Conclusions

Texas has demonstrated its commitment to improving the education of all children in the state by undertaking a very ambitious, broad program of statewide education reform. Many of the reform measures targeted children at risk of school failure, and the state education agency has focused considerable time and resources on developing strategies that would help LEP students overcome the special barriers that often impede their academic success.

The Texas Education Agency has been striving to create an administrative mechanism that fosters coordination among the categorical units that could and should collaborate on behalf of LEP students. It has reconfigured its entire compliance and accreditation process to serve what must be the main goal of the educational system—to help every student, including those who lack English proficiency when they enter the school system, to reach his or her highest level of achievement.

These actions have been triggered by the establishment of a statewide goal for academic achievement, and their effectiveness will be measurable in the future when the system has been in operation for a few years.

As is normal in the early stages of reform, many questions remain to be answered about the approaches taken in Texas. One that has prompted debate is whether referring low-performing districts to the accreditation technical assistance unit—rather than continuing to cite them for deficiencies—will result in a relaxation of enforcement. Other issues about which staff members expressed concern to CCSSO were instances when they felt compliance staff departed from their compliance function to offer technical assistance while on a monitoring visit, and some confusion between the state and district-level about how to interpret various new laws and regulations.

## Summary and Conclusions

CCSSO's search for promising state initiatives designed to improve the achievement of LEP students identified a variety of approaches. Some were primarily administrative and organizational and others addressed more directly substantive concerns such as curriculum development and improvement of instructional methods. State education agencies that have exerted leadership; created and reinforced a climate for change; and committed both energy, resources, and, in some cases, political capital to improving the education of language minority children deserve commendation for their pioneering work.

CCSSO staff followed significant leads to innovative state education agency practices. As might be expected, we found the most focused, intensive and broad efforts in large states with a large population of LEP children. This does not imply a lack of significant effort in smaller states, which have different sets of challenges in addressing the needs of either a small but diverse or highly dispersed LEP population.

The scope of this study did not permit an exhaustive search for promising programs or an exhaustive analysis of the programs visited and studied. We are aware of a number of initiatives that, because of these limitations, are not examined in this document. The state of Massachusetts, for example, has recently undertaken a major commitment to LEP children by the adoption of a policy statement to guide the work of the state education agency. The statement: a) recognizes the unique strengths of children from language minority backgrounds; b) calls for the delivery of instructional services that, to the extent possible, integrates children from language minority backgrounds and those of non-language minority backgrounds to ensure that all children have equal access to the same curricular offerings; and c) encourages native language development as an enrichment experience rather than a remedial measure. The various offices of the Masschusetts SEA are preparing action plans in response to the policy statement.

In New York the Board of Regents unanimously endorsed a policy on bilingual education designed to strengthen education services to LEP students. This includes provisions for state aid, curriculum development, assessment, and teacher recruitment, preparation, and certification. It is part of a state education objective that all children should have the opportunity to become bilingual. The policy allows districts to voluntarily increase the cut-off point for bilingual program eligibility from the 23rd to the 40th percentile. The state legislature has changed the LEP state aid classification from non-categorical to categorical aid to ensure that funds are used by local districts to meet the needs of LEP students.

However, as the entire nation is reviewed, based on survey data, additional information provided by some state education agencies and conversations with numerous state and local officials, the conclusion is that the scope and variety of state efforts occurring on behalf of LEP children remain considerably below the level of need which demographic and educational data reveal about the current and future LEP population.

The initiatives reported here provide a base of experience and creativity on which state education agencies can build and from which they can learn to improve services to minority language children in their own states. In each case, those initiatives represent a conscious effort to overcome past barriers to serving these children—barriers that continue to exist throughout our educational system: fragmented and incomplete policy development, resulting in inadequate or ineffective service delivery; traditional attitudes toward and habits of administering programs and serving students; a context of discomfort and even controversy in dealing with students who speak a language other than English; and lack of resources. Below are some observations about efforts to overcome the barriers.

**Fragmented and Incomplete Policy Development**

The programs that have addressed this problem with the most demonstrable success are discrete and self-contained, with well-articulated goals and evaluation procedures—the Eastman School and similar projects in California; and the Illinois initiative in vocational education.

In California, educators took a highly substantive approach by developing a curriculum matrix for LEP children and assisting schools to implement it. In Illinois, the state focused on an important sub-area of concern for LEP students—vocational education—and within a broader framework geared to serving a range of educationally disadvantaged children, created a program that focused on meeting a very specific need—provision of bilingual supplementary services.

In New Jersey, the SEA undertook several approaches—some administrative, some more substantive—to help prepare LEP students to achieve a passing score on the statewide examination required to secure a high school diploma. The emphasis here, however, was more on administrative changes and training teachers, than for example, on development or implementation of a new curriculum.

**Old Attitudes and Habits**

State education agencies grappling with the problem of LEP students have recognized that any process of change—regardless of its substance—can be stymied by the prevalence of long-held attitudes and procedures. The responses in these cases seem to fall into two categories: redefining lines of administrative responsibility, both within the state agency and in relationships between state units and local officials; and training to provide a common base of knowledge, understanding, and commitment for the new focus on bilingual education.

Each state education agency has a unique system of internal organization, and many have undergone and continue to undergo reorganization as part of the implementation of statewide reforms. Consequently, it is impossible to generalize much about these realignments. However, the main thrust seems to be in the direction of both promoting and requiring more contact among personnel working on various categorical programs that have a potential impact on LEP students. New Jersey went beyond changes in its organization chart to create and mandate local school districts to submit a new coordinated application for state funds that requires interaction among personnel who work on the various programs. One approach to this problem in Texas was to institute a team-based monitoring

system in which districts are audited by personnel who have been trained to understand and identify problems in several categorical programs.

New Jersey has emphasized training as a means of stimulating change. It established one program designed to help categorical program staff who generally worked in one area only to understand and respond better to the needs of multi-problem children, and another to increase the effectiveness of bilingual instruction and prepare students to take the state exam. In Texas, similar goals were being pursued by providing instructional staff with the most up-to-date information about methods that are successful in working with LEP students.

**Discomfort About Bilingualism/Bilingual Education**

Clearly a number of SEAs have overcome both the public controversy about the validity of bilingual education and what is perhaps a normal tendency of all human beings to feel less comfortable when confronted—in any way—with a second language, other than their native language.

Chief state school officers in all of the states have endorsed CCSSO's commitment to working toward the goal of high school graduation for all students. The fact that these state education agency initiatives to improve services to LEP students have been undertaken suggests a recognition that these students—many of whom are at risk—require special attention and special methods if they are to succeed academically in addition to an awareness that in coming years, language minority students will constitute a growing proportion of the students they are responsible for educating.

California—where the state agency created the "case studies" program, wrote the curriculum, invited applications from local districts, and supported implementation with both funding and technical assistance—is a good example of how state agency leadership can stimulate the local district and even school-level commitment required to serve LEP children.

**Lack of Resources**

States have been creative in identifying ways to reorganize and distribute state education agency personnel—even in cases such as Texas where the size of the SEA staff has declined substantially—to take on additional responsibilities as part of one or more LEP student initiatives. In addition, states have drawn on both their own budgets—e.g., for technical assistance in New York—and on federal funds distributed through the state education agency to launch many of the efforts described here. Also at the individual school level, dedicated educational leaders have devised ways to make already limited resources go further. At Eastman in Los Angeles, for example, some creative shifts in assignments and scheduling of bilingual teachers helped to overcome the problem of a shortage of bilingual teachers.

Yet state education agencies continue to confront the dilemma of how to secure resources to expand, replicate, and even continue programs proven to be effective so that the needs of all children can be met. In New Jersey, the Bilingual Education Training Institute was a one-time event, directly affecting only a few schools. In California, the loss of Title VII federal funding for bilingual education was an important factor in withdrawal of state support for the program; in Illinois, changes in the vocational education federal legislation may jeopardize the quality and/or level of supportive services provided to LEP students by the Chicago Public School system.

## Conclusion

In sum, there is still much to be done, much that can be done, for LEP children by state education officials.

Most encouraging, there is also much now to be learned by and communicated among the states. As the initiatives reported here continue and others are undertaken, the body of knowledge and experience on which all state education agencies can draw will expand. Ways must be found not only to encourage new initiatives, but also to encourage exchange of information about those underway already.

*Careful, systematic attention to building methods of assessing the impact of these programs should also be a high priority on the state education agencies' agenda. If success can be documented, this in itself will stimulate additional states to expand their efforts to work with LEP students.*

Each state education agency will need to develop a unique blend of administrative and substantive reform, and a unique balance between guidance, support, and flexibility on the one hand; and mandates and standards on the other, that will do the most for the children they are committed to serve—both now and in the even more demanding future.

CHAPTER FIVE

# Findings and Recommendations

Language minority children are a national resource to be nurtured and encouraged to attain their maximum level of achievement, just like any other children in our educational system.

Lack of English proficiency may impede their academic progress, especially when they enter school in the United States for the first time. But the native language skill and cultural diversity these children bring to our schools and our nation must be valued and developed just as the contributions of previous generations of immigrants and their children have been built upon and valued in our society.

For large numbers of language minority children, we are falling short of the articulated goal of the Council: to ensure high school graduation for virtually every American student. This study by CCSSO demonstrates that the reasons we are falling short are complex and demand our creativity as well as our commitment. The commitment, however, is a vital first step. The number of limited English proficient children in our educational system is increasing and will continue to do so for at least a decade. Existing programs and resources, CCSSO discovered, lag significantly behind current need, with alarming results reflected in an already high, steadily rising dropout rate for certain LEP children, especially Hispanics.

State education agencies, along with the other components of our educational system, confront a two-fold challenge: to provide effective educational programs for youngsters who lack the language competence to succeed in classrooms taught in English and, in many cases, to address the broader needs shared by all educationally disadvantaged children who must live and grow up in poor neighborhoods, in substandard housing, in an environment of high unemployment and crime.

The first step in helping these children is to acknowledge and define their special needs; the second is to search for and implement strategies to meet those needs. Because of the diversity among the children we must serve, and the diversity of communities within our states, there will be many different responses to these challenges. Some states have a large LEP population concentrated in a few districts or schools. Some have a relatively small LEP population, dispersed around the state and representing perhaps twenty or more language groups.

Acknowledging this diversity among states and state education agencies, CCSSO identified the following national picture when the surveys of state agency personnel, interviews, and visits to several states were analyzed and synthesized:

## Findings

1. *Large numbers of LEP children do not receive the special services they need to succeed in school. Some do not receive any at all. In particular, many LEP students are not receiving benefits of categorical programs, other than bilingual education, for which they may be eligible. These include compensatory education, special education, and vocational education, among others.*

2. *The lack of precise information about how many LEP children there are, where they are, and whether they are being served hampers our ability to provide effective educational programs for them.*

3. *Underlying causes of this lack of information include the lack of standard measures for identifying LEP students and the inadequacy of existing assessment instruments.*

4. *There is a gap between what researchers have learned about the dynamics of second language acquisition, and the practices in effect in our schools. One example of this is that although research suggests that it takes from five to seven years to become proficient in a second language, LEP students who do receive bilingual education or ESL services are generally mainstreamed into English classrooms after no more than two to three years without additional language support services.*

5. *Some SEAs have developed initiatives—both administrative and pedagogical—designed to improve the achievement of LEP students, but most of these are relatively new and relatively limited. In some states, statewide reform including the establishment of achievement norms has been the catalyst for developing new approaches to educating LEP children. But it appears that many states have not yet made the commitment to remedial programs many LEP children require to meet the new standards.*

## Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the challenge is great for leadership in each state education agency to make the education of every LEP child to his or her maximum potential both a priority and a reality. Agency leadership must:

1. *Create an intensity of commitment to serving LEP children by articulating their needs and the importance of meeting them.*

2. *Guide the debate and discussion about the needs of LEP students from the "why" and "whether" of serving them to the "how."*

3. *Clarify the fact that LEP students constitute a major and growing component of children "at risk" in our nation's schools, and that any strategy designed to address the needs of children at risk must take into account and respond to the special needs of LEP students.*

4. *Document systematically the current and projected needs of LEP students in the state.*

5. *Examine the adequacy and effectiveness of current efforts to educate LEP children within the state.*

6. *Define and establish high leverage state education agency activities—e.g., research, curriculum development, assessment, training, teacher certification, funding—to improve education of LEP students.*

7. *Make appropriate administrative and organizational assignments within the state education agency to assure better services to LEP students.*

8. *Develop ways of coordinating and collaborating with local school systems to meet LEP students' needs.*

9. *Strengthen state monitoring of the educational status of LEP students and of the effectiveness of programs that serve them.*

10. *Establish ways to learn from the experience of other state education agencies through the exchange of information, research results, program development, and other relevant activities on behalf of LEP students.*

In his presentation to the chief state school officers at their Summer Institute, Hernan LaFontaine both defined the challenge and acknowledged its complexity:

> Providing appropriate and effective educational programs...[for LEP children] is a complicated proposition, requiring educators who are well-informed and conversant with the latest research in language development, assessment, evaluation, and second-language instructional methodologies, and administrators who are committed to designing and supporting programs that ensure LEP children equal access to education (1988).

The chiefs' endorsement of the statement, "Assuring School Success for Students At Risk", signaled our commitment to enabling virtually all students to receive a high school diploma.

How well we embrace and meet the challenge of educating the increasing population of LEP students is an important test of that commitment.

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